



City of
Rockville
Get Into It

Historic District Commission Staff Report: Evaluation of Significance HDC2013-00611, 628 Great Falls Road

MEETING DATE: 4/18/13

REPORT DATE: 4/11/13

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APPLICATION DESCRIPTION: Evaluation of Historic Significance

APPLICANT: Richard J. Ward
1102 Prospect Hill Place
Rockville, MD 20850

OWNER: Congregation of Jehovah's Witness
c/o Miller, Miller and Canby (Jody
Kline)

FILING DATE: 2/6/13

RECOMMENDATION: Staff finds that the property at 628 Great Falls Road meets HDC criteria I-C, II-A and II-E for historic designation, in that it is associated with a significant historic pattern of events as detailed in Rockville's historic contexts, and exemplifies Rockville's late-19th and early 20th century architecture, and that its siting as a "gateway" property to the core of the City is significant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Neighbor Richard J. Ward filed an evaluation request on 2/6/13. Per 25.14.d 1 (v) of the Zoning Ordinance, the HDC will evaluate a property for historic significance if the property is nominated by someone other than the owner. Staff provides historic research and makes a recommendation to the HDC concerning the historic significance of the subject property.



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Letters received - none



RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the property at 628 Great Falls Road meets HDC criteria I-C, II-A and II-E for historic designation, in that it is associated with a significant historic pattern of events as detailed in Rockville's historic contexts, and exemplifies Rockville's late-19th and early 20th century architecture, and its siting is significant as a "gateway" property to the historic core of Rockville.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: 628 Great Falls Road

Applicant: Richard J. Ward, 1102 Prospect Hill Place, Rockville MD 20850

Owner: Congregation of Jehovah's Witness
c/o Miller, Miller and Canby (Jody Kline)

Land Use Designation: Detached Dwelling Restricted Residential

Zoning District: R-90

Existing Use: Single Unit Detached Residential

Parcel Area: 11,991 sf

Subdivision: Exchange & New Exchange

Building Floor Area: 1,384 sf

Dwelling Units: 1

Vicinity

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning			
Location	Zoning	Planned Land Use	Existing Use
North	R-90	Detached Dwelling, Restricted Residential	Detached Residential
East	PD-NMC	Planned Development	Residential
South	Park	Park	Park
West	R-60	Public Buildings and Facilities	Julius West Middle School

Site Analysis

This two-and-one-half story Gable-Front-and-Wing house sits at the junction of two thoroughfares and is a good example of its type. The 1,384 sf house fronts on Great Falls Road, and has a driveway at the rear accessed from Maryland Avenue. The front projecting gable creates the space for the front porch, which is approached by concrete steps with flanking brick piers. The porch roof is supported with a brick column and the porch is enclosed with an open brickwork railing. The three-bay house has a pebble-dash stucco finish, simple wood trim, 6/1 double-hung windows, and an asphalt shingle roof. A one-story shed roof projection at the rear includes an enclosed rear porch and a small enclosed room; both end walls include pebble-dash stucco finish. A small utility shed stands at the southeast corner of the house. The property is trapezoidal in shape, and includes mature trees in the vicinity of the house. Foundation plantings include some shrubs and a hedge in front of the living room windows. The property is in excellent condition and has minor alterations since its construction.

Historic Significance

The subject property meets Criteria I-C (pattern of events), II-A (embodies a building type), and II-E (familiar visual feature due to singular physical characteristics) of the City's adopted Historic Designation Criteria. The property is a "gateway" property into the historic center of Rockville, indicating the predominantly residential character of the City. It was an early outlier in the suburban development of the City, and is an excellent example of the Gable Front and Wing Vernacular house.

The subject property is a single family detached residence in the subdivision of "Exchange & New Exchange." It was constructed in the early part of the 20th century, and was long associated with Gail and Paul Kelley (1940 – 2008).¹

Prior to 1949, the property was outside of the Rockville city limits. It was brought into the City with the mass annexation of 1949. The property was the subject of land speculation in the 19th and early 20th century, and was twice sold at a tax sale. This is typical of the general development history of the City in the 19th and early 20th century, as suburban ideals led to the redevelopment of farmland surrounding the City.²

The property at 628 Great Falls Road is included in the *Historic Buildings Catalog* because of its early date of construction and its high level of integrity. This two-story gable-front-and-wing house type is discussed as a "dominant urban folk building" form that is "descended from the styled Greek Revival houses."³ The importance of vernacular buildings is emphasized in *McAlester*, a primary reference for American architecture, which categorizes common building types and places them in the broader historic context.

Vernacular structures are notable for being local, designed without an architect, and typically, they do not reflect high income status. The vernacular buildings are historically significant, however, for their ability to record the lives of ordinary people at a particular period of time.

¹ Paul Kelley died 12/3/1954; Gail Kelley continued to live at the property [She is listed in the *Polk Telephone Directory* as late as 1975].

² See nomination of *Rockville Park National Register Historic District* (2011).

³ Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1988), p. 92.

The subject property is a vernacular residential structure with a high level of integrity, constructed in the early part of the 20th century prior to the expansive population explosion in the mid-20th century that led to the development of the modern City of Rockville. The subject property reflects the early era of suburbanization, and illustrates the vernacular architecture of the day.

The subject property is a good example of the late 19th and early 20th century two-story gable-front-and-wing buildings in Rockville. With all the development conducted in the mid-late 20th century, these early 20th century homes are increasingly rare. An earlier example in the vicinity is the designated *Bessie Hill House*, constructed in 1902, illustrating the use of this house type for low-income residents. The designated *Fred and Mary Nellinger House* (1890) at 419 Reading Avenue, illustrates a Victorian example relating to the Greek Revival type, with its prominent front gable extending well beyond the cross-gable section.

Period of Significance: Reflective of the construction date and the environmental setting for the property, the Period of Significance is 1925 – 1970. This reflects the time period during which the house was constructed and retained its historic configuration with access from Great Falls Road. Maryland Avenue was constructed after 1970, after which time the environmental setting for the property was reduced with property sales to Maryland DOT, and the rear access from the new road was provided.

Historic Criteria

Historic designation is recommended if a property meets one or more of the HDC's adopted Criteria.

I. Historical and cultural significance:

- A. Event: the site of a significant historic event **No.**
- B. Person: identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society **No.**
- C. **Pattern of Events: exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities Yes.**

The subject property illustrates the development of suburban residential property at the edge of the City during the late 19th and early 20th century. Owners of local farmland surrounding the City deeded small residential parcels for sale. During the late 19th and early 20th century, land speculation was a common practice resulting in both financial gain and loss. Tax sales were common, as abandoned lots came on the market at reduced rates as the economy allowed. The typical residential dwelling was built in the style of the day, and provided homeownership for a middle-class family. The house fronts on Great Falls Road, and reinforces the historic character of the Rockville-Great Falls Road. The rear yard is accessed from Maryland Avenue, a road constructed after the Period of Significance of this property.

- D. Cultural Value: has character, interest, or value as part of the development, or cultural heritage of the City, County, State, Nation **No.**

II. Architectural and design significance:**A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction Yes.**

The subject property is a good example of the Gable-Front-and-Wing house of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This illustrates a variation that broadens the representation of the building type in Rockville.

B. Represents the work of a master No.**C. Possesses high artistic values No.****D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction No.****E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape Yes.**

This criterion is not often used, as there has to be something unique to the property that distinguishes it from other properties in the area that may even be of the same age. This house is singularly situated at the junction of two major roads in the City, and constitutes a "gateway" property into the city's historic core. The property is visible from a distance, as one approaches from the west, and this helps to announce the historical and residential character of the city. This type of development, with single family detached historic houses, represents a 19th and 20th century method of development, while the 21st approach to development is quite different.

Historic Integrity of structure and site: *The building retains its original character, massing, windows, setting. Alterations include the new front door; front porch railings, column, and deck; rear porch enclosure mid-century; pebble-dash stucco finish is historically appropriate, but may not be original.*

Original site and setting largely preserved (lot size, environmental character, trees, setbacks, streetscape) Yes

Outbuildings present and largely preserved N/A

Original or near original condition (all changes reversible)

Minor alterations (porch removal or enclosure, roof material replacement, siding added over old siding, basic mass and fenestration intact Yes.

Substantially Altered (basic shape, original façade plan, windows and doors have been obscured or changed)

Level of site significance: Local; State; National

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Posting of sign on property two weeks prior to meeting

Postcard notices sent out two weeks prior to meeting

Staff report posted on City's web site one week prior to meeting

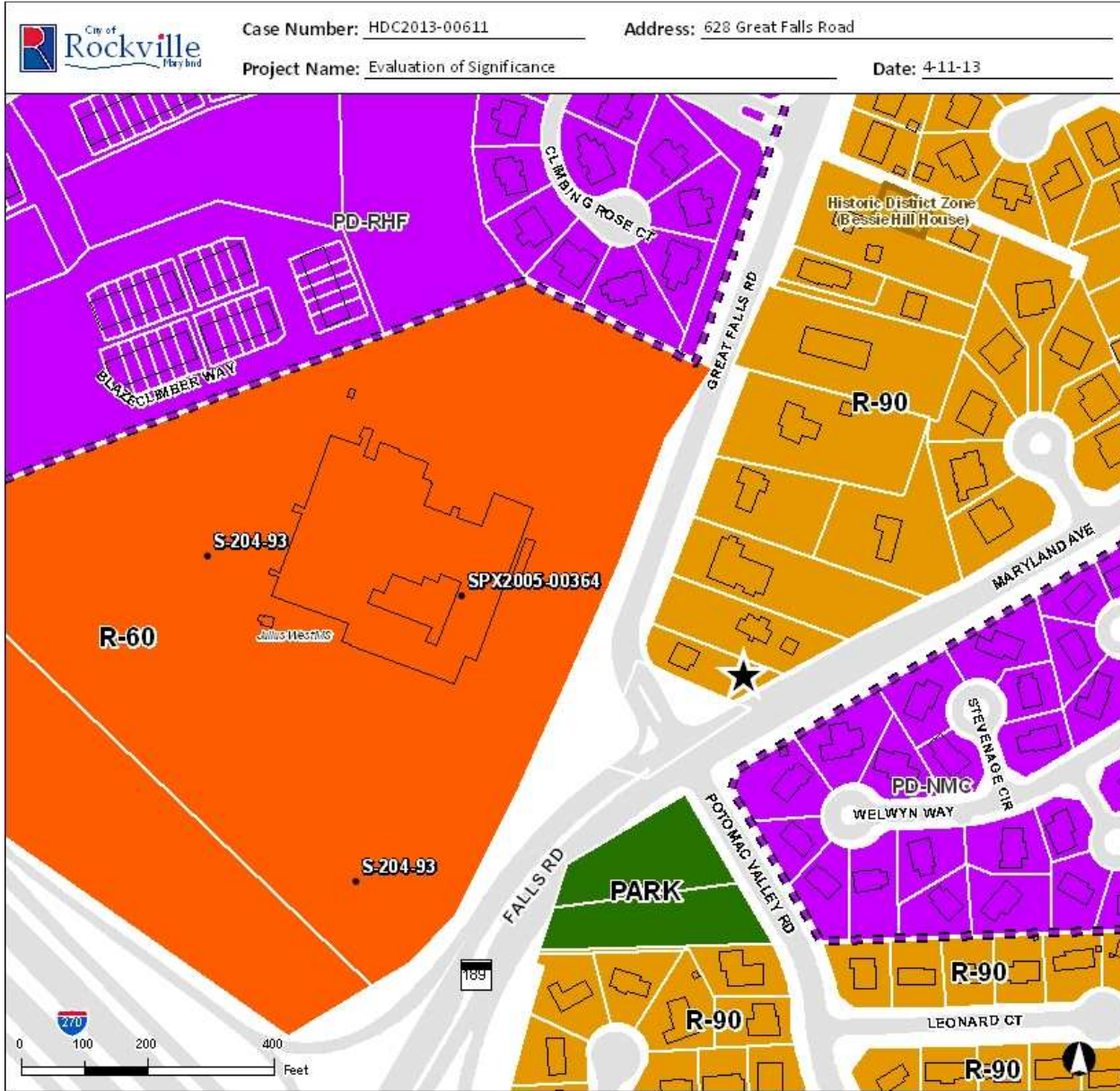
FINDINGS

Staff finds that the property at 628 Great Falls Road meets HDC criteria I-C, II-A and II-E for historic designation, in that it is associated with a significant historic pattern of events as detailed in Rockville's historic contexts, and exemplifies Rockville's late-19th and early 20th century architecture, and that its siting as a prominent "gateway" property to the historic core of Rockville.

AERIAL MAP



ZONING MAP



★ Project Location

Legend

R-400 - Residential Estate	RMD-10 - Residential Medium Density	MXC - Mixed-Use Commercial
R-200 - Suburban Residential	RMD-15 - Residential Medium Density	MXCD - Mixed-Use Corridor District
R-150 - Low Density Residential	RMD-25 - Residential Medium Density	MXE - Mixed-Use Employment
R-90 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Restricted Residential	PD - Planned Development	MXNC - Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial
R-75 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Residential	IL - Light Industrial	MXT - Mixed-Use Transition
R-60 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Residential	PARK - Park Zone	MXTD - Mixed-Use Transit District
R-40 - Single Unit Semi-detached Dwelling, Residential	MXB - Mixed-Use Business	Special Exceptions
Clusters	Historic Preservation Parcels	Twinbrook Metro Performance District
Planned Developments	Lincoln Park Conservation Overlay	Town Center Performance District